

INTERIM FISH CONSUMPTION NOTIFICATION
for TRINITY RIVER WATERSHED (Trinity County)
including: Trinity Lake, Trinity River (above Trinity Lake),
Coffee Creek, Carrville Pond, and the East Fork Trinity River
and its tributaries

CONSUMPTION RECOMMENDATIONS
July 2002

Eating sport fish in amounts slightly greater than what is recommended should not present a health hazard if only done occasionally, such as eating fish caught during an annual vacation.

High doses of methylmercury can affect people of all ages but it is safe to consume fish from Trinity Lake on a regular basis if you follow the consumption recommendations. Because the fetus and young children are more sensitive to the harmful effects of methylmercury, all women of childbearing age and children under age six should be particularly careful about following the consumption recommendations. The notification recommends that these groups consume less than the general adult population and children age six or older.

The limits given below for each species assume that no other contaminated fish is being eaten. If you consume several different listed species from the same area, or the same species from several areas, your total consumption still should not exceed the amount recommended for the fish with the fewest recommended meals. One should also realize that fish from other areas of the State may also be contaminated with mercury, and that the results of consuming all fish are cumulative. One simple approach is to just use the lowest recommended amount as a guideline to consumption. A meal for a person weighing 154 pounds is an eight-ounce serving (uncooked weight); meal size should be adjusted according to body weight, see chart below.

How big is a meal?

If you weigh....	Your meal size should not exceed
Pounds	Ounces*
19	1
39	2
58	3
77	4
96	5
116	6
135	7
154	8
173	9
193	10
212	11
231	12
250	13
270	14
289	15
308	16

Meals per month

The general adult population and children age 6 or older should not eat more than:

- ◆ 4 meals per month of bass and catfish, or
- ◆ 12 meals per month of other fish from Trinity River watershed areas listed above.

Women of childbearing age and young children (under the age of 6) should not eat more than:

- ◆ 1 meal per month of bass
- ◆ 2 meals per month of catfish, or
- ◆ 4 meals per month of other fish from the Trinity River watershed areas listed above.

**Sixteen ounces is equal to one pound, and meal sizes are for uncooked weight.*

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact one the following agencies:

- ◆ Trinity County Health Services (530) 623-8209 or (800) 766-6147
- ◆ California EPA, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (916) 324-7572

Or see the OEHHA web site for more information on California sport fish consumption advisories: <http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/.html>

PRESS RELEASE

A preliminary investigation of Trinity Lake and several streams and ponds has revealed elevated levels of mercury in certain fish populations. As part of an on-going investigation of mercury impacts from historic gold and mercury mining in the Trinity River watershed, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) has conducted a screening study of mercury concentrations in several fish species. While the mercury levels found are sufficient to warrant this Health Notification, the fish sample group in individual water bodies is limited and more study is needed.

Almost all fish, whether purchased commercially or caught as sport fish, contain some level of mercury. Mercury is a widespread contaminant in California lakes and streams. It occurs naturally in the rock formations of the Coast Range and a number of advisories have been issued in that region due to mercury levels in fish. Mercury in Trinity Lake comes from upstream historical gold and mercury mining operations in the Trinity River watershed. Mercury, in the form of methylmercury that is found in the fish, is a toxic metal that can cause damage to the nervous system, and in low levels can have an adverse effect on the neurological development of children.

The following areas of the Trinity River Watershed were sampled by USGS: Trinity Lake, the Trinity River (above Trinity Lake), Coffee Creek, Carrville Pond, and the East Fork Trinity River and its tributaries. Fish species tested were: smallmouth and largemouth bass, rainbow trout, brown bullhead, white catfish, and green sunfish. Specific information on the number of samples, species of fish sampled, locations sampled, and specific mercury levels measured can be found at the USGS website <http://ca.water.usgs.gov/mercury/trinity>.

Some species were not tested and the limited number of samples of other species make it is difficult to make detailed recommendations for specific streams or areas of the lake. However, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), a branch of the California Environmental Protection Agency, made an initial assessment of the information obtained from the USGS. From their analysis, several general conclusions can be made:

- ◆ 1. The larger, older fish of species tend to accumulate more mercury in the flesh.
- ◆ 2. Among different species where adequate samples were collected, the lowest levels were found in rainbow trout. Higher levels were found in smallmouth and largemouth bass.
- ◆ 3. The average level of mercury encountered in the bass is below the federal Food & Drug Administration action level for commercially marketed fish of one part per million. But the level is high enough to warrant public health concern and notification of this condition.

Clearly more study and testing are necessary to further define the extent of the problem, and to develop more definitive advice if indicated. Nationwide, there exist more than 2,500 fish consumption advisories, of which more than 1,900 are due to mercury. By following these interim recommendations, the public will be protected and able to catch and consume their favorite sport fish.